



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

NATO FOREIGN AND DEFENCE MINISTERS' MEETING

1 June 2021

Policy Brief

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Main Issues Discussed

- **Preparations for the upcoming NATO Summit & NATO 2030**
- **Afghanistan: NATO's continuing support**

Key Takeaways

- **NATO 2030** will be at the centre of the **14 June Summit in Brussels**.
- NATO 2030 decisions at the Summit fall into **three principal themes**: 1) **Reinforced Unity**, 2) **A Broader Approach to Security** and 3) **Safeguarding the Rules-based International Order**.
- Broad agreement existed to start work on **NATO's next Strategic Concept** to reflect the current strategic environment.
- **Continued structured support for Afghanistan's security forces, government and people** remains the best way to support peace after NATO's *Resolute Support* mission comes to an end.

Ministers also:

- Endorsed a new **Policy on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV)**.
- Reaffirmed their condemnation of Belarus' forced landing of a civilian airliner.

Additional notes

- For Allied foreign and defence ministers, the virtual meeting was the **final opportunity to collectively consult and coordinate before the NATO Summit**.
- Ministers also **discussed the broader challenges posed by Russia and China** in an era of increasing global competition.

I. PREPARATIONS FOR THE UPCOMING NATO SUMMIT & NATO 2030

- NATO Foreign and Defence Ministers **met separately in an online format**. It was their **final opportunity to collectively consult and coordinate positions prior to the 14 June Summit in Brussels**, which NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg called "*a pivotal moment for our Alliance, and our collective security.*"
- **The NATO 2030 initiative**, which will prepare the Alliance for the future, **will be at the heart of the Brussels Summit**.
- There was **broad consensus on the need to take ambitious Summit decisions**. As NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg stressed, this will demonstrate "*that Europe and North America stand together in an age of global competition. And that we need to show transatlantic unity not just in words, but also in deeds.*"
- NATO 2030 decisions at the Summit fall into **three principal themes**: 1) **Reinforced Unity**, 2) **A Broader Approach to Security** and 3) **Safeguarding the Rules-based International Order**.

REINFORCED UNITY

- NATO remains the unique and indispensable forum for transatlantic coordination, and Allies will ensure **more frequent consultation on all issues affecting Alliance security**.
- Allies will **strengthen commitment to collective defence**. Among others, they plan to **reaffirm the 2014 defence investment pledge** – building on seven years of consecutive increases in defence spending - and **fully implement all decisions taken to strengthen NATO's posture**.

- There is broad agreement that Allies must start work on **NATO's next Strategic Concept**. It will take into account the more unpredictable and more contested strategic environment since 2010, when the current Concept was adopted. Moreover, it will reflect NATO's adaptation since 2014 – the biggest adaptation in a generation.

A BROADER APPROACH TO SECURITY

- The Alliance will raise NATO's level of ambition on **resilience**. Allies will seek a **more integrated and coordinated approach to protect critical infrastructure** and aim to **make societies in the Alliance less vulnerable to attack and coercion**. In this context, the Secretary General welcomed Romania's proposal for a Euro-Atlantic Centre for Resilience, which will include a clear focus on NATO-EU cooperation.
- Allies will also take decisions to **sharpen NATO's technological edge, maintain interoperability, respond to emerging disruptive technologies and prevent technology gaps among Allies**. The Alliance will decide on the creation of a **Defence Innovation Accelerator**. The structure, governance and location are yet to be determined. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg noted it would be "*a new centre to foster greater cooperation among Allies on technology, underpinned with extra funding from nations that decide to participate.*"
- Allies will also address the **security implications of climate change**. The Secretary General noted the Alliance will "*set the gold standard when it comes to understanding and mitigating the security implications of climate change.*" He pointed to three key means: first, via **increased monitoring and tracking of climate change** to better understand its potential impact on Allied security; second, through **adapting to operate in all conditions**, including extreme heat and cold as well as be able to adapt to rising sea levels and more extreme weather; and third, by **playing its part in reducing military emissions**.

SAFEGUARDING THE RULES-BASED INTERNATIONAL ORDER

- Allies will recommit to safeguard the rules-based international order. They will do so by:
 - a) **defending Allied values and interests**,
 - b) **deepening partnerships** with like-minded partners and **forging new ones in the Asia-Pacific region, Africa, and Latin America**, and;
 - c) **stepping up training and capacity-building** for partners.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Increasing NATO common funding for deterrence and defence activities

- Earlier in 2021, the NATO Secretary General had recommended to Ministers **to increase NATO's common funding**, including for contributions to cover costs when Allies deploy troops for defence and deterrence activities. At the press conferences during the ministerial meeting, he said "***there is broad consensus, that we should invest more together.***"
- He argued that "*We need to spend more. But we also need to spend more together. Therefore, **Allies should invest more together. Because pooling our resources is a force multiplier. A more effective way to boost our common security. And it sends a powerful message of unity and resolve – both to our own people, and to any potential adversary.***"
- He added that "*increased common funding is a way to **provide more resources, higher readiness of our forces, more exercises, investment in infrastructure, prepositioned equipment and also working with partners.***"

Allied consensus on China:

- Asked about the London Summit's declaration that China presents both opportunities and challenges for the Alliance and specifically Allies' consensus on the challenges, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg noted: *"I'm confident that when NATO leaders meet in a couple of weeks here in Brussels, they will agree [on] a NATO 2030 agenda which will also reflect the **increased awareness and a higher degree of common understanding of the convergence of positions** when it comes to the challenges posed by China and increased global competition which matters for us in this region in North America and in Europe."*

NATO's Open Door Policy

- Asked about prospects for further decisions on future enlargements at the Summit, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg put the emphasis on **the importance for aspirants to continue with important reforms**. He noted: *"Our message is that the focus should be on **reforms to modernise the defence and security institutions because we believe that that's the best way to move towards further Euro-Atlantic integration. But we also strongly believe that reforms to modernise defence and security institutions is also an aim in itself.** And we continue to provide support, we help with these reforms programmes and we will, of course, continue to do that. And I expect that also, heads of state and government will recommit to continue to provide support to these highly valued partner nations of NATO [Georgia and Ukraine]."*

II. AFGHANISTAN – NATO'S CONTINUING SUPPORT

- The Ministers discussed **NATO's continuing support to Afghanistan** and the **withdrawal of Allied and partner forces** which began on 1 May 2021.
- The drawdown of forces continues progressing in **an orderly and coordinated** way, with the safety of personnel at the heart of the process.
- While NATO and partners are ending their military presence, Ministers discussed the opening of a new chapter in the Alliance's relationship with Afghanistan. **Allies agreed that NATO's future support for Afghanistan will consist of three main pillars:**
 - **NATO will maintain a civilian presence in Kabul** to allow for the continuation of diplomatic engagement. The presence will also enable NATO to provide advice and capacity-building support to the Afghan security institutions and to administer continued financial support.
 - NATO will **continue military education and training outside of Afghanistan**. Allies will focus on the Afghan Special Operations Forces.
 - NATO intends to **fund the provision of services enabling NATO Allies and the broader international community to continue their operations in Kabul**. According to the Secretary General, this includes vital infrastructure, such as a functioning and secure international airport.
- As Defence Ministers noted, **the continuation of Allied collective support for the Afghan security forces, the Afghan government and the Afghan people is the best way to contribute to peace efforts.**

III. NATO POLICY ON PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE

- Defence Ministers endorsed a new [policy on preventing and responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence \(CRSV\)](#). The policy outlines **specific actions to prevent and respond to such violence in all NATO operations, missions, and mandated activities by the North Atlantic Council**. Moreover, it underscores **NATO's support for the international community's efforts to end impunity for this crime.**

IV. BELARUS – FORCED LANDING OF CIVILIAN AIRFLIGHT

- While the North Atlantic Council had already issued a [strong statement on 26 May](#), Ministers also discussed **developments in Belarus after the forced landing of a civilian aircraft** on its way from one Allied nation to another on 23 May.
- NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg noted that “*We have strongly condemned the **serious violation by Belarus of the norms of international civil aviation, and the fundamental right of the freedom to the speech [sic]. And I welcome sanctions by NATO Allies, and the European Union.***” He went on to say, “*This shows the importance of like-minded countries standing together.*” Based on assessment of security measures at the headquarters, “**we have decided to restrict the access of Belarussian personnel to the NATO headquarters,**” the Secretary General said.